

# What To Do If You Have A Problem With A Food Product

## Problems:

- A. Your hot dog has a strip of plastic inside.
- B. The canned chili contains a metal washer.
- C. You think a restaurant dinner made you ill.
- D. A sugar-coated cockroach is in your box of cereal.
- E. Milk you just purchased smells bad, but it's not expired.

## What can you do?

### **FOR HELP WITH MEAT, POULTRY AND EGG PRODUCTS** (examples A and B):

Call the toll-free U.S. Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Hotline at 800/535-4555.

### **FOR HELP WITH RESTAURANT FOOD PROBLEMS** (example C):

Call your local city or county Health Department.

Problems with deli or take-out products from supermarkets should also be directed to your local Health Department.

### **FOR HELP WITH NON-MEAT FOOD PRODUCTS** (example D):

For complaints about food products which do not contain meat, poultry or dairy—such as cereal—contact the Indiana State Department of Health at 317/233-7360.

Problems with seafood products should be directed to the Food and Drug Administration at 800/332-4010.

### **FOR HELP WITH MILK OR DAIRY PRODUCTS** (example E):

Contact your city or county Health Department.

## To Begin An Investigation, you must have:

1. the original container or packaging (if applicable);
2. the foreign object (such as the plastic strip or metal washer);
3. any uneaten portion of the food (refrigerate it); and
4. any other of the same, unopened food items for testing purposes.

## Information you should be ready to provide:

1. Your name, address and telephone number;
2. The brand name, product name and manufacturer or distributor of the product;
3. The size and package type;
4. Can or package codes (not UPC bar codes) and dates;
5. Establishment number (EST) usually found in the circle or shield near the USDA "inspected and passed" phrase on meat and poultry products;
6. Name and location of the store (or restaurant) and the date you purchased the product;
7. You can complain to the store or the product's manufacturer, if you choose not to make a formal complaint to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## If You Think You Are Ill, See A Physician.

1. If an injury or illness allegedly resulted from use of a meat or poultry product, you will also need to tell the USDA Hotline staff about the type, symptoms, time of the occurrence and name of attending health professional (if applicable).
2. If you can't reach the Hotline staff, or if an injury or illness allegedly resulted from restaurant food, call your local Health Department.